

### Reconciling equality and pluralism: an agenda for the developed societies

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# **Reconciling Equality and Pluralism**

## **An Agenda for the Developed Societies**

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Institut  
für  
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# **Reconciling Equality and Pluralism**

## **An Agenda for the Developed Societies**

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## Abstract

Why did developed societies not foresee the dilemma of reconciling equality and pluralism until now? This is the basic question the present paper asks and tries to answer. Yet before doing so it has to clarify three questions. First, the adjective 'developed' calls for some clarifications, in spite of the fact that it is frequently used both by experts and the lay public. Second, it is necessary to specify the sense in which the concepts equality and pluralism, are used. Third, the paper must provide the rationale for the compelling need for a New Agenda.

The present paper "Reconciling Equality and Pluralism" was presented at the Institute for Advanced Studies on 7 March 1995. A former version was discussed at the Collegium Budapest, on 10 November 1994.

Let me begin by specifying the scope of my lecture. First, the adjective 'developed' calls for some clarifications, in spite of the fact that it is frequently used both by experts and the lay public. Second, it is necessary to specify the sense in which the concepts equality and pluralism, are used. Third, I propose to ask and answer the question as to why developed societies did not foresee the dilemma of reconciling equality and pluralism until now. Finally, I must provide the rationale for the compelling need for a New Agenda.

## I.

The imagery of societies is often projected in terms of their quality of life, which is a summation of both material and non-material dimensions. Thus in the U.N.D.P. Report of 1991 one gets three rankings/ratings, based on a) human development, b) human freedom, c) human distress.<sup>1</sup> (See Table 1.) The table provides a profile of the top eighteen countries.

It is clear from Table 1 that by and large the state-societies<sup>2</sup> which scored 'high' on human development also have high scores on human freedom. But when one looks at the profile of human distress one notices substantial variations between these societies. A few general points may be noted here. First, with the exception of Japan, all the societies which figure in the table are populated predominantly by the Europeans.<sup>3</sup> Second, of the seventeen European countries listed, seven (Australia, France, Austria, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal) do not have a very depressing human distress profile. None of these societies are development toppers; in fact five of them are at the bottom of the development ranking, and three (scoring 30 or less) have only medium ranking with regard to freedom. Third, of the seven countries with a relatively low human distress profile (among the seventeen European countries) five are predominantly Catholic, one is Orthodox and one is Protestant.

It may not be too far fetched to suggest that Protestant individualism contributes to human distress! Fourth, the size factor does not seem to be significant in providing a better profile in regard to human distress as exemplified by the cases of Sweden, Denmark and Finland with just about 5–8 million population each; small is not always beautiful! Fifth, the United States of America, the biggest and certainly the most heterogeneous of all societies which figure in the table, provides the most distressing profile of human distress. Finally, some of the societies might appear to have a positive profile with regard to human distress precisely because of the nature of the indicators used. More about this within a moment.

Which of the states are more developed, those scoring a high rank on human development, or on human freedom, but a lesser one on human distress? If the answer is that 'true development' is achieved only when there is a confluence, if not a fusion, between development and freedom and only when human distress is negligible, if not completely absent, one is

1 The indicators of human distress included in the U. N. D. P. Report are murders, suicides, rape, drug crimes, prisoners, pollution and unemployment. I have not incorporated the last item into table I., but that does not affect my argument.

2 The term 'nation-state' assumes coterminality between state and nation. However, in the vast majority of the cases this is not true and hence it may be better to use the term 'state-society'.

3 It may be noted that the present analysis applies the adjective 'European' not only to geographical Europe but also to those regions which have been colonized and appropriated by them, although, of course the reference is confined to the developed ones.

only postulating an ideal type and not grappling with the complexity of empirical reality. Therefore, the point at issue is not one of identifying praxiological lags from an assumed ideal type but that of an essential theoretical/conceptual gap. That is, one has to be clear about the very concept of a developed society.

I suggest that two vital elements are ignored by the U.N.D.P. Report in constructing the quality of life index, namely a) *disparity* in income distribution and b) *pluralism*, that is, the attitude of the 'ingroups' towards the 'outgroups'.

I want to underline this point because in the context of material prosperity experienced in developed societies it is widely held that the majority of the population has become middle class, and even the wage workers have undergone the process of *embourgeoisement*. Consequently, the concern for disparity in incomes and increase in inequality has been dismissed as inconsequential by many. For example, Raymond Aron asked rhetorically: "If the basic needs are provided in an approximately similar way, what real difference is made by great fortunes or huge incomes ... ?" (1970:11). It does matter though because it is those who have huge incomes and great fortunes who set the modes of life-style by indulging in vulgar consumption patterns which, in turn is aspired to by an increasing proportion of the population, leading to their resorting to illegitimate means to achieve the socially approbated goals. Available evidence suggests that the gap between culturally valued goals and legitimate means to achieve them is an important source of crime and deviance, which in turn adversely affects the quality of life in society.

In so far as developed societies remain largely homogeneous it is relatively easy to maintain a uniformly high standard of living or at least to keep disparity within a limited range but when societies are heterogeneous – racially and culturally – both of these may not be possible.<sup>4</sup> Thus the disparity in incomes among the citizens of homogeneous Scandinavian countries was only to the tune of five to seven times during the heyday of social democracy, while in the highly heterogeneous United States of America it is more than 300 times! Incidentally, this disparity is not recent and not the creation of Republicans.

Affluent societies often need the presence of external elements. In 1960's and 1970's one third of Switzerland's labor force was constituted by foreign immigrant workers, who did all the menial jobs and spared the Swiss citizens from this ordeal. Switzerland is certainly not an exception, and the presence of foreign immigrant workers is found in all the affluent countries of

4 It is necessary to clarify briefly the distinction between three types of societies: homogeneous, heterogeneous, and plural, as they are frequently referred to in the course of this lecture. All societies are stratified based on age, gender and class. But if a society's population is drawn from the same race, ethnic group and/or nationality, it is viewed as homogeneous. Conversely, multi-racial, multi-national, multi-religious and polyethnic societies are referred to as heterogeneous societies. In the latter type of societies, there is a greater possibility of institutionalized inequality based on racism (South Africa, until recently) or caste (India, before 1947) which render them hierarchical societies. But a heterogeneous society need not be hierarchical as culturally diverse groups with socio-economic equality can co-exist. Both in the case of homogeneous and heterogeneous societies, however, the internality of the constituting elements are not questioned. Thus the American 'Negro', the Indian 'untouchable' and the Greek slave were all accepted as essential and useful internal elements. In contrast, the internality of one or another segment in a plural society may be questioned, that is, a plural society is polarized between insiders and outsiders. Sometimes, the insiders may be marginalized (e.g. the First Nations in the New World) and sometimes the outsiders may be deprived of their rights (e.g. Indians in Fiji, or guestworkers in Western-Europe). It is necessary and useful to recognize the distinctions between these societies for the clarity of analysis.

Western Europe, which certainly affects the internal milieu of these societies. To quote Bottomore:

The fact that these workers are citizens of another country, speak another language, and participate in a different culture, largely excludes them from political life in the countries where they work ... The most significant features are the growing heterogeneity of the working class as a result of ethnic diversity, and the creation of a distinct, socially isolated sub-proletariat (1971:395).

That is, if disparity of incomes in a society goes beyond a certain range, if some sections of its population are marginalized and if the incidence of crime is substantial, the quality of life in such a society cannot be 'high'; it should *not* be defined as 'developed'.

## II.

The appellation developed is intended to denote not only the level of material but also ideological advancement; the two important elements of ideology being equality and individualism. Of the two concepts – equality and individualism – the former is fairly widely understood and even accepted. And yet it needs to be noted that the two referents of equality – equality of opportunity and distributive equality – connote radically different ideological positions. Although equality of opportunity is almost universally endorsed, a minority argues that it does block the blooming and flowering of gifted individuals who should not be subjected to the notion of formal equality (see, Letwin (ed.) 1983), because in doing so societies are indulging in a self-denying ordeal in tapping the full potentialities available to them through extraordinary individuals. This aggressive individualism, bordering social Darwinism, seems to fit well with competitive capitalism, a feature of all developed societies. An inevitable corollary of this position is *not* to recognize any group-based or collectivity-oriented inequality.

There are many more who oppose distributive equality because according to them it would sap the individuals of their vitality and motivation to work. However, the notion of basic or minimum needs (although there is no consensus on this) is increasingly endorsed in that all individuals, irrespective of their ability and contribution to society, are believed to be entitled to these needs. To put it differently, the notion of equality is conceptualized as providing the members of a society the opportunity to demonstrate their competence so that their entitlement to differential rewards is rendered legitimate.

Equality and individualism are inextricably intertwined in their origin and development (see, Beteille 1986: 121–134). And yet, while equality of opportunity has apparently acquired universal recognition as a value, this cannot be said about individualism. To complicate matters, their relationship is not unilinear in that in some contexts they reinforce each other while in others they repel each other. Thus excessive individualism inevitably endangers the kernel of equality by fostering intense competition, which invariably leads to inequality. The defense which is proffered in favor of this process is that one can only ensure equality of opportunity which should necessarily lead to inequality of rewards. And, it is often argued, that only then would individuals be motivated to realize their full potentials. Thus the notion of individualism in the limited context of material rewards is ultimately



latched on to an incentive system which enables human beings to become unequal.

But there are several difficulties here. First, it is impossible to provide equality of opportunity except in the formal-legal sense in so far as institutions, such as family, differential access to information and resource, etc., exist. Second, the very instruments through which equality is sought to be established (e.g. education) are often the instruments which reinforce the prevailing inequality. Third, the privileged in the system often honestly believe that they are inherently superior and the under-privileged are inferior. For these reasons, the notion of equality taken in conjunction with individualism is incapable of coping with the complex reality of heterogeneous and plural societies. On the other hand, I suggest that the notion of equality along with the idea of pluralism is capable of coping with the situation.

Pluralism is a much misunderstood concept and is used at least in two different senses. One set of authors following Fournival (1948) use the term to mean 'co-existence' of two or more segments of the population within a polity who produced and transacted goods and services but did not transfuse culture or blood (see Kuper and Smith (eds.) 1971). This form of 'pluralism' exists in situations in which the collectivities involved are graded into superiors and inferiors. Pluralism here essentially means institutionalized inequality, the anti-thesis of authentic pluralism. Another set of authors following Tocqueville (1956) refers to pluralism as a condition which emerges through division of labor and social differentiation articulating as political interests (see Kornhauser 1960; Shils 1956). Here the reference could be, and often it is, to the attachment of different segments of population, within a polity, differentiated in terms of class, to different ideological orientations based on their material interests. This is the sense in which the notion of pluralism is often used in the case of developed heterogeneous societies. When a developed society tends to maintain its boundary vis-a-vis those who are defined as inferior or outsider, it tends to become 'plural' in the Fournivalian sense.

I suggest that pluralism should be conceptualized as a value-orientation. When economic and political interests are articulated in heterogeneous societies by deprived sections of population, there is often a nexus between race, religion and language, on the one hand, and material interests, on the other. In such societies political parties or economic organizations may emerge to champion the cause of one or the other of these segments of population, or their combinations. These efforts are characterized as parochial at best and anti-national at worst by the state and the cultural mainstream. To put it pithily, heterogeneous societies have a qualitatively different type of pluralism which is essentially a value-orientation that the different segments of population which constitute them should hold for one another. That is, pluralism presupposes heterogeneity and diversity. Therefore, there is no moment for pluralism to crystallize and/or to be articulated in a homogeneous society which in turn means that these societies need not and often did not recognize group-based inequality. Keeping these preliminary clarifications in mind let us look at the internal milieu of the developed societies populated by Europeans. Broadly speaking, the three revolutions gave birth to the Three Worlds. The bourgeois revolution produced the First World, the proletarian revolution produced the Second World and the colonial revolution produced the Third World. But some of the ex-colonies have undergone a double-revolution – colonial and bourgeois – and got incorporated into the First World (North-America, Australia, etc.). Typically, these societies of the New World are racial and cultural extensions of the Old World. Be that as it may, the

internal social milieu of the societies of the New World is drastically different from that of the Old World. The manner in which the different segments of the population are incorporated into these societies accounts for this variation.

The 'new' nations of the United States of America, Canada, Australia, etc., have different layers of populations which are racially and culturally different. First, all of them have the original inhabitants, (the First Nations) although their number and proportion remains substantially reduced today. Second, the dominant white migrants, with different socio-cultural layers based on religious (Protestant, Catholic, Jew) and linguistic background. Third, there is the non-white migrant population (mainly Asian), which arrived subsequently, in search of better opportunities. Fourth, we find the Black population, brought in initially as slaves. (This applies largely only to the U.S.). Given the different modes of incorporation, the structure of deprivation of these collectivities varies vastly.

As against the settler majority countries of the New World, the situation in the Old World is qualitatively different in that the overwhelming majority of the population in each of the state-societies is native-born, they are nationals, that is those who have a moral claim over the territory which they inhabit. In contrast, the societies of the New World are poly-ethnic in that no segment, save the natives, have a moral claim on the territory to which they belong (see, Oommen 1989:279–305; 1994:26–46). Consequently, not only does the deprivation of the populations which constitute these societies vary but their composition too is different. Thus if the most deprived category in the developed state-societies of Western Europe are the immigrant workers, particularly those of different races, languages and religions, in the New World they are the Natives and the Blacks. Clearly then, the developed societies vary widely in terms of their internal social milieu and in terms of the building-blocks which compose them.

As I see it, the challenge which is to be addressed by developed societies is the dilemma posed by the competing demands of equality and pluralism. The dilemma is not inherently irreconcilable but embedded in the very manner in which equality is sought to be defined and the nature of the unit invoked in establishing this equality, namely, the individual, ignoring the inequalities anchored to groups.

I am now in a position to state my argument succinctly. I suggest that a) diversity/heterogeneity is a social fact and pluralism is an attitude, a value-orientation to that social fact; b) there is a qualitative difference in the meaning of equality and pursuantly of inequality in homogeneous and heterogeneous societies; c) the notion of equality sought to be established between individuals is conceptually inadequate to cope with the complexity of socially heterogeneous societies; d) the ongoing process of globalization, if it is understood and facilitated in the proper sense of the term<sup>5</sup>, is bound to render the developed societies more and more heterogeneous; e) therefore pluralism as a value-orientation is to be nurtured by these societies if they are to deserve the appellation developed and hence f) the dilemma that they face can be tackled only by combining the pursuit of individual-based equality with pluralism, a collectivity-oriented value through which inter-group equality is sought to be achieved.

<sup>5</sup> Globalization facilitates the untrammelled flow of capital from the developed to the less developed world, but developed countries try to prevent the flow of labor from the underdeveloped countries thereby blocking globalization.

### III.

Let me now turn to the third item of my agenda. Why is it that the developed societies did not face the dilemma between pluralism and equality until now? As I see it, the developed societies did not confront the irreconcilability between pluralism and equality earlier for the following reasons. First, empirically rooted social theory is hardly a couple of centuries old and it emerged and flourished mainly in the European world, and much of it developed only after World War II. As construction of social theory is geared to understand, analyze and/or to improve society, it is the immediate empirical reality of one's own society which moulds one's attempt to formulate social theory.<sup>6</sup> Diversity was not a major feature of European 'nation-states' and where it existed the tendency to dominate was very strong on the part of the cultural mainstream. This obliterated the very possibility or the need to recognize pluralism.

Second, the expression 'nation-state', a coinage which crystallized in Western Europe reflected the actual or hoped-for coterminality between nation and state, i.e. culture and polity, which made it possible to focus on the individuals as the unit in defining the value of equality. And wherever the rupture between culture and polity existed it was invariably ignored in the name of 'national integration', which in effect meant state-building at the cost of weak and minority nations within these state-societies. In fact, more often than not, the measures undertaken in the name of nation-building was actually an enterprise in nation-destruction (see, Connor 1971–72: 319–355).

Third, the presumed onward march of secularization and rationality assumed by the liberal expectancy and articulated through dichotomous constructions of social reality led to the untenable belief that ascriptive affiliations and primordial ties are bound to disappear from developed societies. The faith in the possessive individualism was reinforced by the belief in the existence of this process. However, the incessant search for tradition and roots, the re-discovery of primary groups the re-emergence of primordial collectivism and the persisting and virulent expression of social and cultural xenophobia disproved the above beliefs and assumptions (see, Van Den Berghe 1983: 238–252).

Fourth, the excessive importance and privileged position assigned to class and class analysis in understanding the stratification system of developed industrial societies ignored the durable character of the elements of social structure such as race, religion and language. This point, seen in conjunction with point three above, reinforced the need and possibility of celebrating individualism a value, nay as a cult.

Fifth, the developed societies are or happen to be Western and Christian, except for a few new entrants, such as Japan and the Asian Tigers, who are usually treated as aberrations, at best exceptions. This implied, although it was not always stated explicitly, that certain religious values promoted advancement. It is often argued that if Protestant ethic is accepted and 'n' achievement motivation is endorsed, others too will and can reach the same goal. In fact, some even suggest that Protestant-Christianity, given its emphasis on the individual, is conducive to and nurtures democracy. Thus it is easy to see the nexus between capitalism, democracy and Protestant Christianity, as all three sacralize individualism.

6 The discipline of social/cultural anthropology conceived as and devoted to the study of other societies was geared to civilize the 'primitive' and 'backward' societies and to facilitate colonial administration and christianization. While the study of other societies did eventually contribute to social theory, its initial aim was different.

However, it was Christianity which introduced the concept of equality for the first time in human history; not only equality of all human individuals in the eyes of God, but also of all 'nations' which were but branches of a more general humanity. The current over-emphasis on individualism is, therefore, somewhat paradoxical.

Sixth, as pluralism and individual-based equality are believed to be conceptually irreconcilable, heterogeneity is defined and cognised as constituted by a continuum of inferior and superior elements, in fact, a hierarchy. Consequently, different physical types (races, if you prefer), religions (including denominations) and nations (linguistic collectivities with a territorial base) tend to get ordered into a hierarchy creating a superordinate/subordinate relationship which makes it impossible to apply the notion of equality to these groups. This is a conceptual trap into which Western social science has fallen, even if unwittingly.

Finally, it needs to be stated that the conceptions of society held by monism and pluralism differ radically. If the monists envision a homogeneous society of the same race, or religion and/or speech community, pluralists seek to create a society of citizens with equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities, even if they are drawn from utterly different backgrounds. While the former insists that the individual should be the basic unit, the latter focuses on collectivities and communities. And hence, individual-collectivity relations need to be conceptualized differently when referring to a heterogeneous society, as they are more complex and indeed intricate.

Let me recapitulate the threads of my argument so far, even at the risk of slight repetition. Individual-based equality is theoretically plausible and praxiologically tenable in homogeneous societies where classes, gender and age groups constitute the basic building blocks of social structure. That is, in those societies where the individual is the unit of decision-making, market economy and majoritarian democracy are practical propositions. But in heterogeneous societies collectivities as against the individual become the salient units of social structure and hence market economy and majoritarian democracy need to be tempered and adapted so as to avoid the intense competition which is dysfunctional particularly for the weak and the minorities. Pursuantly, equality as conceptualized in and applied to the former type is not entirely amenable for application in the latter.

It is necessary to anticipate and answer a question, at this juncture, namely, what is the rationale in maintaining that there is a qualitative difference in the nature of inequality between homogeneous and heterogeneous societies? To answer this question, we need to note that there are essentially two sources of inequality: performance and perception. Generally speaking, inequality in homogeneous societies emanates out of differences in performance which can be improved and hence abolished through appropriate socialization within the family, inculcation of relevant values, adequate education, training, etc. That is, inequality in homogeneous societies can be done away with the help of appropriate social engineering. This is exemplified by the increasing mobility among classes, gender and age groups in most societies. That is, even if a group has been defined hitherto as inferior in performance, it is relatively easy to change this evaluation in homogeneous societies.

Inequality in heterogeneous societies is largely based on the dominant collectivity's perception of the quality of the performance of the dominated collectivity. This may have nothing to do with the actual quality of performance of the collectivity in question but the dominant collectivity's cognition and evaluation about the dominated collectivity's history and culture. Therefore, eradicating inequality in such societies is not simply a

matter of social engineering but largely one of redefining the dominant collectivity's evaluation about the quality of performance of the dominated collectivity. If such a redefinition does not take place there are only three routes to 'solve' the problem, all of which are geared to homogenization. The first is genocide; clearly the victims are the weak and/or minority. The second is liquidating heterogeneity through assimilation of the weak; the extreme measure being intermarriages. While intermarriage across diverse groups may be welcomed if done voluntarily, it cannot be advocated as a formal measure to achieve equality because this entails coercion. Third, bifurcation of the society into homogeneous units, that is secession, based on race, religion or language which clearly smacks of intolerance. If the first solution results in the physical annihilation of identity groups, the second solution leads to the annihilation of cultural diversity. The third assumes that the co-existence of diversity and crystallization of pluralism are impossible.

I am making this point because the quest for homogenization is often viewed as a quest for equality, that is co-existence of social closure and equality is believed to have a greater chance as compared with the co-existence of heterogeneity and equality. To put it differently, in nation-states, that is mono-national states equality is pursued through the fusion of nationality and citizenship. In contrast, the nub of inequality in heterogeneous societies lies at the disjuncture between citizenship and nationality, the latter being defined in terms of membership in different racial, religious or language groups, not necessarily a correct definition.

The oppressed and the exploited do not often accept the premise that the state is an impartial or final arbiter. They are not satisfied by simply asking the question, What is the state? but pose the problematique, Who is the state? That is, who wields power and authority. Thus decentralization of authority across primordial collectivities which are specific to heterogeneous societies is a much more vexatious process as compared with dispersal of power across classes, genders, or age-groups in homogeneous societies. That is, the constituent elements of a heterogeneous society may often pursue the goal of shared sovereignty, an untenable quest in homogeneous societies.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the issues of equality takes a different direction in heterogeneous societies. Therefore it is not surprising that some would argue for the homogenization of societies because such societies are likely to be more egalitarian and participative.

However, the proposition is not admissible for three reasons. First, to homogenize often means to establish the hegemony of the dominant collectivity, annihilation of the weak and minority collectivities or at the best their assimilation into an artificially contrived cultural mainstream, leading to the eclipse of their identity. Second, most state-societies, as they are constituted, draw their population from diverse sources. Therefore, annihilation and assimilation endanger the principles of maintaining diversity and developing pluralism. Third, contemporary societies are constantly exposed to alien influences and hence characterized by frayed edges and loose textures. If anything, the ongoing process of globalization would intensify this trend. In such a situation the only viable option is to accommodate diversity, foster pluralism and nurture inter-group equality.

I have hinted above that in terms of heterogeneity and in terms of the mode of incorporation of the weak and minority elements into them, the developed European societies differ substantially. One may identify seven different situations in this context. First, the 'Old World' *heterogeneous*

<sup>7</sup> This is not to deny the fact that a homogeneous society may get divided into two or more sovereign states based on secular ideology. However, the natural affinity between the populations of these states will be maintained in spite of the artificial vivisection of the society.

state-societies in which the majority live in their traditional homelands. The prominent examples are the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, etc. Second, societies where nationals and migrants from equally developed societies live together, as exemplified by French migrants in Germany or vice versa. Third, nationals from the affluent countries of Europe and migrants from less developed countries of Europe, such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland, etc., who live together. Fourth, nationals from affluent countries of Europe and migrants of non-European backgrounds, particularly from Africa and Asia, living together. Fifth, migrants of the same race who are linguistically and/or denominationally different coming to live together in the 'new nations' as exemplified by the English and the French in Canada or a variety of European groups in the U. S.. Sixth, First-Nations, the original inhabitants of the New World, live along with their oppressive conquerors and dominant colonizers. Examples of these are afforded by Australia, Canada and the U. S. Seventh, the ex-slaves who were brought to the colonies and the dominant migrants who brought them, living together as in the case of the Blacks and Whites in the U. S. Clearly, some of these situations are more complex viewed in terms of the number of elements present.

The seven situations listed above may be grouped into three from the perspective of the range of inequality prevalent in them. Situation 1, 2 and 5 may be described as cultural diversity among equals. Situation 3 does pose the problem of inequality but in a mild form. However, situations 4, 6 and 7 do pose serious problems of equality. That is, diversity need not automatically result in inequality, but it does so depending upon the background of the constituting elements and the modes of their incorporation.

## IV.

Let me conclude my presentation by attempting an answer to the question: What is the compelling need for the New Agenda?

The radical rupture between tradition and modernity began in Europe with the emergence of the twin values of equality and individualism. The acceptance and practice of these values were possible only in relatively homogeneous societies. In fact, the very emergence of nation-states in Western Europe could be interpreted as a response to this need. But individual-based equality is conceptually inadequate and praxiologically untenable in heterogeneous societies till such time when inter-group equality is established, as the building blocks of such societies are often groups of different racial, religious and linguistic backgrounds, some of whom are subjected to cumulative inequality and oppression. Collectivity-oriented equality should be established as a pre-requisite in such societies so that all the constituting collectivities are in a position to contribute their share in all contexts and at all levels to the running of the system. This in turn calls for the recognition and nurturing of pluralism as a value.

Three historical and contemporary developments necessitate the above noted change in value orientation. First, European colonization which produced racially and culturally heterogeneous societies. second, the emergence of the European Union wherein the cultural heterogeneity is manifold, as compared with the relatively homogeneous 'nation-states' of Europe. Third, the ongoing process of globalization which necessitates the multi-directional flow and consequent co-existence of population with differing racial and cultural backgrounds.

Given such a complex empirical scenario, pluralization, both within and across, of societies seems to be the only viable alternative. Pluralization is to be discerned temporally, regionally and culturally. By alluding to temporality I am suggesting that social reality is interlocked into the past-present-future syndrome. No society can or even needs to shed its tradition in its entirety; it should retain the assets in its tradition and nurture them. Similarly, no society can or should ignore the process of modernization but borrow selectively those elements of modernity which augment its quality of life. Viewed thus, pluralization is a process of synthesizing tradition and modernity; it avoids the prevalent widespread tendency of instant contemporization in the cognition of human reality.

Second, societies have territorial dimensions, in spite of globalization and the emergence of 'one world'; they are located in different regions with different ecological and environmental features. This spatial situational specificity produces ecological and environmental pluralism. Third, the above two in conjunction produce differences in economy, values, and institutions. Any society which wants to retain its authenticity, that is identity and specificity, should pursue the path of pluralization instead of jumping on the bandwagon of globalization.

I must hasten to add here that the plea for pluralization is not an advocacy for relativization. Relativization is a project which insists on retaining all aspects of societies and cultures in their pristine purity. The ideology of relativism is inimical to the very process of transformation, it insists on the retention of tradition, irrespective of its content, perpetuating obscurantism and even fundamentalism. Pluralization, then, is a process different from both globalization which ignores the specificities of cultures and locales and relativization which insists on the retention of all aspects of tradition ignoring context and content. It is a selective, creative response to both globalization and localization.

Equality, to be authentic, will have to be conceptualized and practiced in the world of concrete reality, which is a diverse and heterogeneous one. No amount of commitment to the principle of equality by the privileged will make it viable from the perspective of the disadvantaged. Equality, to be authentic in a heterogeneous world, will have to be seen in conjunction with collective identity. This calls for situating the equality of collectivities and equality of individuals in a sequential chain. To insist on the latter without providing for the former, its pre-requisite, is to put the cart before the horse.



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*Table 1:*  
Rank and Scores of Human Development, Human Freedom and Human Distress

<i>Country</i>	<i>Estimated Population in Millions (1990)</i>	<i>Human Development Ranking</i>	<i>Human Freedom Index Ranking</i>	<i>Profile of Human Distress</i>
<i>Japan</i>	123.5	1	32	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>Canada</i>	26.5	2	34	Drug crimes highest; second highest level of pollution
<i>Sweden</i>	8.4	4	38	Murders, among the highest four countries; suicide, among the highest seven countries; rape, among the highest four countries
<i>Switzerland</i>	6.6	5	34	13th in rank in terms of prisoners
<i>U.S.A.</i>	249.2	7	33	Murders, the highest (11 times the rate in Japan); 8th highest rate in suicide; highest in terms of prisoners (10 times the rate of the Netherlands); the highest rate in rape (28 times the rate in Portugal); Drug crimes the third highest; pollution, the highest
<i>Netherlands</i>	15.0	8	37	Second highest incidence of rape
<i>Australia</i>	16.9	9	33	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>France</i>	56.1	10	35	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>United Kingdom</i>	57.2	11	32	Figures among the top nine countries with high incidence of suicides
<i>Denmark</i>	5.1	12	38	Figures in the top four countries with the highest incidence of murders; ranks fifth in drug crimes

<i>Finland</i>	5.0	13	36	Figures in the top five in the incidence of murders; figures among the top seven in regard to the incidence of suicides; ranks third with regard to the incidence of rape
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<i>Country</i>	<i>Estimated Population in Millions (1990)</i>	<i>Human Development Ranking</i>	<i>Human Freedom Index Ranking</i>	<i>Profile of Human Distress</i>
<i>West-Germany</i>	61.8	14	35	Figures among the top seven in regard to the incidence of suicides; ranks third with regard to pollution
<i>Belgium</i>	9.8	16	35	Figures among the top seven in regard to suicides
<i>Austria</i>	7.6	17	36	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>Italy</i>	57.1	18	29	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>Spain</i>	39.2	20	26	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>Greece</i>	10	24	31	Does not figure significantly on any item
<i>Portugal</i>	10.3	36	30	Does not figure significantly on any item

Explanatory notes:

1. Worked out on the basis of data/information available in U.N.D.P., *Human Development Report 1991*, Oxford, 1991.
2. Only countries with a population of five million or more are included in the table.
3. The Human Freedom Index assigns one score to each item of freedom protected and a 'zero' to each item violated, the total number of items being 40. Countries ranking between 31–40 are taken to be having a high freedom ranking, but the highest score secured by any country is 38.
4. The profile with regard to human distress is worked out based on units of 100,000 population, i.e., how many murders, suicides, rape, etc. per that unit of population.